Important Information About Lead In Your Drinking Water

The Town of Chatham found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and children 6 years and younger. Please read this notice closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

This notice is brought to you by the Town of Chatham. State Water System ID# 5143114.

Date: 10-25-2012

Health Effects of Lead

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes).

New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free,” may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as “lead free.” However, plumbing fixtures labeled National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified may only have up to 2 percent lead. Consumers should be aware of this when choosing fixtures and take appropriate precautions. As a result of amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act during 2011, beginning January 2014, “lead free” criteria will mean no more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead when used with respect to wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings, and fixtures.

The Town of Chatham obtains water from the Cherrystone Creek which is treated at the Town’s treatment plant. The Town has a long standing history of providing pH adjustment as well as addition of a corrosion inhibitor as part of the treatment. The source water for the Town does not have any significant (or even detectible levels) of lead. When water is in contact with pipes [or service lines] or plumbing that contains lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have plumbing containing lead. New homes may also have lead; even “lead-free” plumbing may contain some lead. EPA estimates that 10 to 20 percent of a person’s potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

Don’t forget about other sources of lead such as lead paint, lead dust, and lead in soil. Wash your children’s hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.

Steps You Can Take To Reduce Your Exposure to Lead in Your Water

1. ***Run your water to flush out lead.*** Run water for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking, if it hasn’t been used for several hours. This flushes lead-containing water from the pipes.

2. ***Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.*** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.

3. ***Do not boil water to remove lead.*** Boiling water will not reduce lead.

4. ***Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.*** You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or
www.nsf.org
for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality.

5. ***Test your water for lead.*** Call us at 434-432-9515 to find out how to get your water tested for lead. The Town can provide a list of certified labs that can be used for lead analyses.

6. ***Get your child tested.*** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.

7. ***Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.*** New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8% lead to be labeled as "lead free." Visit the National Sanitation Foundation Web site at
www.nsf.org
to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures. As a result of amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act during 2011, beginning January 2014, "lead free" criteria will mean no more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead when used with respect to wetted surfaces of pipes, pipe fittings, plumbing fittings, and fixtures.

What Happened? What is Being Done?

Lead and copper tap monitoring has been an ongoing requirement of the Town's water supply. Such monitoring was originally established by EPA's Lead and Copper Rule during June 1991 which is incorporated into the Commonwealth of Virginia Waterworks Regulations. During the June-September 2012 compliance monitoring period, lead was detected above the action level of 0.015 mg/L (ppm) in some of the tap sampling locations. The intent of the lead

and copper monitoring requirements is to identify locations where lead and copper are most likely to be present and sample at the most representative locations where this is likely to occur. As noted above, presence of lead (and copper) is likely attributed to the corrosive nature of drinking water in contact with customer plumbing which either is made of lead material itself (note none known to exist in the Town of Chatham distribution system) or lead containing plumbing (such as copper pipe with lead based solder) or fixtures. Water temperature can be a factor and higher levels can be expected during warmer weather months. Contact time is also a factor and a minimum 6 hour period of nonuse is incorporated into the sampling procedures. The Town collected compliance samples during June and August 2012 from ten different customer locations and lead was determined to be above the action level in three of them, thus a substantial number had no to low detectable lead concentrations, but none the less was enough to be above the allowable action level criteria. Although the Town continues to target and maintain optimal corrosion control treatment by pH adjustment and addition of a corrosion inhibitor at the treatment plant, and these were maintained throughout the period of sampling, the Town intends to change to a corrosion inhibitor that will hopefully be more effective at preventing lead from being released into tap water. We anticipate making this treatment change immediately with follow up sampling during the January-June 2013 period. The Town will certainly keep its customers updated and advise when we are back in compliance. In the meantime, please follow the above steps to minimize exposure to lead in the drinking water.

For More Information

Call us at 434-432-9515 *or visit our website at* chatham-va.gov. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's Website at **www.epa.gov/lead** or contact your health care provider.